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Chairperson: Ms. Intelmann. . . . . (Estonia)
later: Ms. Gomes (Rapporteur). . . . . (Portugal)
later: Mr. Fonseca (Vice-Chairperson) . . . . . (Brazil)
later: Ms. Intelmann (Chairperson) . . . . . (Estonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/61/262 and 363)

1. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/61/262) and the report of the Secretary-General on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2006/71), expressed strong concern at recent findings that revealed the degree of deprivation associated with urban poverty: the *State of the World's Cities* report for 2006-2007 showed that the living conditions of slum-dwellers in terms of access to water and sanitation, education and health care were often worse than those of their rural counterparts. Evidence showed that those living in slums — more than 1 billion people — suffered from levels of malnutrition similar to or worse than those found in rural areas. HIV prevalence was substantially higher for slum-dwellers than for the rest of the urban population, and they were the most vulnerable to waterborne and other communicable diseases. Consequently, life expectancy was the lowest among the urban poor, despite their proximity to markets, hospitals, water supply and sewerage systems.

2. That urgent situation was compounded by rapid urbanization and the urbanization of poverty, for the *State of the World's Cities* report also showed that the rate of slum growth was almost equal to the rate of urban growth. Consequently, most people born in, or migrating to, cities would be living in life-threatening conditions on an unprecedented scale. To continue to ignore the plight of slum-dwellers would be to run the risk of not achieving the Millennium Development Goals for a significant portion of the poor, and the risk of massive social exclusion with all its consequences for peace and security.

3. There were, however, grounds for guarded optimism. There had been unparalleled attendance at the third session of the World Urban Forum, held in Vancouver in June 2006, on the theme "Our Future: Sustainable Cities — Turning Ideas into Action", with 10,000 people from over 100 countries representing all spheres of government and civil society unanimous in their call for action. The Forum had underscored the need to mainstream the urban poverty agenda within both the development and environmental agendas; the need for participatory and inclusive urban governance; and the need for the strengthened role of local authorities to meet the housing and basic service needs of all women, men and children. It had also called for more resources to be mobilized and devoted to affordable housing to meet slum challenges.

4. Another cause for guarded optimism was the promulgation by the Secretary-General of the special annex for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, which had come into force on 1 August 2006, and would further strengthen UN-Habitat and its ability to fulfil a catalytic role in attaining the slum upgrading and water and sanitation targets of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The United Nations had placed the focus of the Human Settlements Foundation's work thus far on policy guidance, technical assistance, global monitoring and advocacy, but the long-awaited revised rules and regulations would provide a key determinant to the effectiveness of its action: the ability to invest, and provide support in the key area of affordable housing finance. Consequently, the United Nations could begin to respond to paragraph 56 (m) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome and its call for urgent action and measures to prevent the future growth of slums.

5. Meeting the target of achieving by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers, and preventing future growth of slums would require an annual investment estimated at $20 billion until 2020. International assistance in the area of urban development currently stood at $5 billion. The only way to meet the challenge posed by slums was to mobilize domestic capital for investment in pro-poor housing and urban development. UN-Habitat had been working over the years to coordinate international efforts to support Member States in adopting pro-poor land policies, which were a key determinant for slum upgrading, and was designing and field testing pro-poor housing finance systems under the Slum Upgrading Facility and the cooperation of some commercial banks had been secured.

6. The Human Settlements Programme had also been working closely with international finance institutions to pioneer pro-poor access to basic urban infrastructure and services, particularly in the area of water and sanitation, and had striven to improve the capacity of local authorities to engage in pro-poor participatory planning and management and to empower slum-dwellers by involving them in decisions affecting them. It had actively supported the convening of regional ministerial conferences on housing and urban development to muster the political will for attaining the human-settlements-related goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration.

7. In her view, UN-Habitat was on the verge of meeting most of the necessary pre-conditions for going to scale in housing and urban infrastructure and development. The revised regulations and rules relating to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation would enable it to provide seed capital and loan guarantees that would reduce the perceived risk of investing domestic capital in pro-poor housing and urban development. They further enabled the United Nations system to leverage its policy and capacity-building efforts, to encourage pre-investment and private-sector engagement. Finally, they empowered the urban poor to realize the process of transforming their hovels into houses — or transforming their homes into tangible and recognizable assets — and to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

8. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) enquired about concrete measures that could be taken to promote synergy and facilitate the work of the Human Settlements Programme in the context of the operational changes being envisaged in the United Nations system.

9. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme) said that she hoped the reform process under way would look to the future: the future was urban. That meant preparing to solve the challenge of urban poverty. Latin America, Asia and Africa were — or were fast becoming — predominantly urbanized. As part of its work in sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat must place greater emphasis on pro-poor mortgage finance systems — an important issue, given the lack of affordable housing — one which she hoped would be addressed by Member States in the context of the reform process — and on the promulgation of the special annex for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

10. **Mr. González** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) pledged his support for and cooperation with the work of the Human Settlements Programme, particularly in relation to the specific requirements of Latin America. He described a project in his country aimed at the direct involvement of people living in marginalized areas in the management of those areas, particularly in relation to the provision of basic services and other matters affecting their quality of life, which hopefully could dovetail with the work of the Human Settlements Programme.

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*) (A/61/93, 126 and 258; A/C.2/61/4)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*) (A/61/72-E/2006/54, A/61/75-E/2006/49 and A/61/76-E/2006/51; A/61/181, 268 and 277)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*) (A/61/229 and Corr.1; A/C.2/61/CRP.1)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*) (A/61/225)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*) (A/61/225)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (*continued*) (A/61/25 (Supp. No. 25) and 322)

11. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) expressed concern at the falling water level in Lake Victoria, referring to the United Nations Environment Programme publication *Africa's Lakes: Atlas of Our Changing Environment*. The level of Africa's largest freshwater lake had fallen by approximately 1 m since the early 1990s, as a result of climate change. The lake supported a dense population — one of the world's poorest — of over

30 million people, in addition to providing a lifeline to millions more in Sudan and Egypt through the Nile River. The dire consequences of soil degradation and extensive deforestation in that region provided a serious challenge to the deepening global commitment to sustainable development. As a result of the falling water level, in addition to the serious drought experienced by the Lake Victoria basin countries (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania), the region was facing an energy crisis, as Uganda depended heavily on hydroelectric power generation and distribution, which had been adversely affected. Coupled with the sharp rise in the world market price of oil, that situation had resulted in energy insecurity, seriously calling into question the sustainability of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 as an increasing number of people resorted to the use of firewood and other sources of energy.

12. For Uganda, the challenge in the implementation of Agenda 21 was that the natural ecosystem contributed directly to the economy and livelihood of the population, for example in the area of brick and firewood production, crafts, livestock, fisheries and tourism. Natural resource management and environmental protection must therefore become key factors in poverty reduction and economic growth, and a critical balance must be achieved between control and total prohibition in the use of those resources. The environment agenda must be mainstreamed into national development, and environmental degradation, together with the elimination of poverty, must be addressed through global cooperation and partnership. Inclusive, results-oriented and effective environmental policies and regulatory frameworks were necessary.

13. For the least developed countries and small island developing States, climate change had become a greater security threat than terrorism, because those poor countries were suffering the long-term effects of environmental crimes committed elsewhere, which risked eliminating the progress made so far by developing countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. With the dwindling global supplies of oil and water, and the accompanying tensions, energy and climate policies would become crucial for global security. The way forward was increased access by the poor to reliable and affordable energy services; the sharing of new technologies for energy efficiency; rapid realization of the Kyoto Protocol objectives; and the strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

14. **Mr. González** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that strengthening sustainable development was foremost among the changes his Government was implementing in line with its commitment to attain internationally agreed goals. Under the Venezuelan Constitution, each generation had a right and a duty to protect and maintain the environment for future generations. His country stressed the need to modify unsustainable production and consumption patterns and supported the principle of States' shared but differentiated responsibility for environmental protection. Accordingly, because they caused more environmental destruction and had more resources, developed countries had a greater responsibility to adopt measures and assist developing countries in that process.

15. In recognition of the importance of energy for development, his Government was promoting a number of energy integration initiatives as part of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). Such initiatives were designed to guarantee access to non-renewable energy resources and defend the right of the countries concerned to use such resources.

16. His country had also designed the project "Misión Árbol", which sought to save forests and restore natural areas throughout the country. The goal for the current year was to plant 20 million trees. To that end, $10 million had been earmarked. Countries were responsible for looking after their own forests and should use their national budget to that end. However, that fact should also be recognized and compensated by the international community. The work of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) should be strengthened in order to achieve sustainable management of all types of forests, which should be given priority in the multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015.

17. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela honoured its commitment to preserve natural resources and species in line with the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was the ideal instrument for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. His Government strongly rejected genetic use restriction technologies (Terminator technology), field tests and commercialization of sterile seed technologies. For that reason, it opposed genetically modified foods and welcomed the agreements reached at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention regarding the extension of the de

facto moratorium on genetic use restriction technologies.

18. Desertification, meanwhile, was a major problem, primarily because of its effect on food production. In an effort to strengthen South-South cooperation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had backed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, contributing $6 million in the past five years to environmental rehabilitation programmes to countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It had also supported the establishment of a sustainable development foundation to fight poverty and desertification in various regions. He hoped that the South would stand up to globalization and the single development model and continue to promote a new multipolar international system. Developing countries suffered the most from the environmental degradation caused by savage capitalism, which continued to destroy natural resources and, therefore, the very foundations of human life.

19. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supported the development aspirations of small island States, whose capacity to reduce risks and mitigate and respond to the consequences of natural and man-made hazards needed to be strengthened. To that end, it had established the "Simon Bolívar" International Humanitarian Assistance Brigade, which offered national and international disaster prevention and response assistance.

20. The idea that people and nature were quantifiable and tradable goods was deplorable; even water and air had become consumer goods. Nature was being destroyed by such inhumane conduct. He stressed that international agreements must preserve the sovereign right of States to manage their own natural resources and rejected attempts to turn natural resources into market instruments or commodities that could be exchanged for development assistance. He therefore rejected the establishment of a new international body or normative system other than UNEP, on the pretext of protecting natural resources. Such a body would not only create an additional bureaucratic burden, but also constitute yet another instrument that served the interests of developed countries, as it would weaken the position of developing countries by transferring political issues relating to the environment from the General Assembly to technical bodies.

21. Lastly, he reaffirmed the principles enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, and the Monterrey Consensus.

22. **Ms. Gómez** (Ecuador) said that various factors, including climate change and poverty, were to blame for the increasing frequency of natural hazards and the increasing vulnerability of the countries affected by them. As such, disaster reduction must be seen as a pillar of sustainable development and an issue requiring urgent attention. Her delegation called for the effective implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and the strengthening of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The proposed Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was, without doubt, the best way to promote the international cooperation needed to ensure implementation of the Hyogo Framework. In that context, a comprehensive approach was essential in order to strengthen regional disaster response capacity and maximize the impact of activities coordinated with the Strategy.

23. Ecuador was firmly committed to the work of the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon (CiiFEN), established in early 2003. The Centre had been strengthened institutionally and, owing to the support of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Strategy secretariat, had made progress on developing a training and information strategy covering such issues as early warning, risk management and improved response capacity. The urgent need to support the populations of countries affected by the El Niño phenomenon required greater commitment by the international community to the Centre's activities. Ecuador therefore reiterated its call for the financial support necessary for the Centre to meet its objectives. Her delegation was concerned by the fact that the issue had been addressed only briefly in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/229 and Corr.1). Climate change was the most important global issue at the current time. The international community needed to create the conditions to achieve sustainable economic growth, eradicate poverty and build capacity to respond to the consequences of climate change.

24. **Ms. Coye-Felson** (Belize), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed support for the statements made on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Group

of 77 and China. The Caribbean region had agreed on a legal framework for the protection and development of the marine environment of the wider Caribbean region under the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. The United Nations, through various General Assembly resolutions, supported the need for such a framework and recognized the importance of an integrated management approach to the Caribbean in the context of sustainable development. Furthermore, by endorsing the Mauritius Strategy, the General Assembly had sanctioned the efforts of small island developing States and development partners to work together to promote the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. CARICOM appreciated the international community's support in furthering that important objective.

25. The Caribbean Sea Initiative had reached a new stage of implementation with the establishment by the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) of the Follow-Up Commission for the Caribbean Sea Initiative, which, in an effort to develop a better understanding of the concept of "special area in the context of sustainable development", had proposed a definition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area. CARICOM urged the international community to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development during the current session, in order to give impetus and legitimacy to the operationalization of the necessary framework for the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea.

26. Climate change and sea-level rise presented serious and immediate threats to small island developing States and low lying coastal States. CARICOM called on the international community to demonstrate the necessary political will and take concerted and more aggressive action to address the impact of climate change on sustainable development. CARICOM strongly supported the positions of AOSIS and the Group of 77 and China on the urgent need for further international action and cooperation on mitigation and adaptation.

27. At the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, small island developing States had underscored the need to reduce emissions, including through sustainable energy consumption patterns and renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. CARICOM had established the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme to remove barriers to the use of renewable energy and to foster its development and commercialization. CARICOM once again requested international support for the programme and for the development of incentives and financing mechanisms to promote renewable energy as an integral part of sustainable development. The discussion of those issues during the review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would doubtless be reflected in the outcome of the policy session of its current implementation cycle.

28. One of the major initiatives of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, inaugurated by CARICOM in 2005, had been the Mainstreaming Adaptation to Global Change project, which sought to mainstream climate change adaptation strategies into the sustainable development agendas of small island and low-lying States. The project had recently received a new World Bank grant to support a pilot programme in Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. CARICOM welcomed the international community's continued support for the Centre, which was becoming a regional centre of excellence in capacity-building, technical assistance and coordination.

29. According to the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/61/229), the upward trend in disasters was likely to continue. CARICOM underlined the need to recognize disaster reduction as a development objective and a target for development assistance and for improved and rapid humanitarian response, including financing. Accordingly, it echoed the call for a stepped-up response from the international community to the growing and complex problems of disasters and vulnerabilities.

30. CARICOM welcomed the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund, for which it urged long-term support. It also supported the Secretary-General's recommendations for improved and accelerated implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action coupled with the further strengthening of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and national and local capacities, the realignment of the policies of international financial institutions, and more sustained investment in risk reduction, climate monitoring and associated hazard risk management.

31. CARICOM had continuously pointed to the increasing evidence of the impact of warmer climates on the frequency and intensity of weather events. As an area prone to natural disasters, CARICOM would appreciate further information on international efforts

to promote the convergence of disaster reduction and climate change adaptation.

32. **Mr. Soborun** (Mauritius), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which fully supported the statement by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that SADC attached great importance to sustainable development and had taken specific measures to achieve it. Its Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, for example, set out a common vision for a southern Africa actively engaged in economic cooperation and regional integration and in building a more prosperous future for the whole region. The Southern African Power Pool, meanwhile, aimed to facilitate energy pooling and develop a regional electricity infrastructure. However, despite its best efforts, many in the region still lacked access to energy sources. Weak infrastructure and volatile international markets had impacted negatively on efforts to secure access to reliable energy sources, while price instability caused inflationary pressures that jeopardized growth sustainability. Noting that the region still required international support in order to meet the goals set out in Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, he encouraged the donor community and the financial institutions to fulfil their commitments under the Monterrey Consensus. In that connection, he welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/61/258), in particular the recommendation contained in paragraph 57 (a).

33. Taking note of the Secretary-General's report on the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/61/277), he drew attention to the symbiotic relationship between the Millennium Development Goals and the Mauritius Strategy, which provided a coherent framework for the international community's work. Data would help overcome obstacles to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Strategy. He called upon development partners to provide comprehensive and timely support, integrating financial resources, technology development and deployment, and capacity-building to accompany the region's economic reform. Despite the many constraints facing them, small island developing States had made a considerable effort to mainstream sustainable development. It was deplorable that 15 years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, they were still having to appeal for financial resources, access to affordable and appropriate technology, and capacity-building, all of which were fundamental to implementation.

34. Natural disasters were a major obstacle to sustainable development. Developing countries were extremely vulnerable to such disasters and therefore urgently needed enhanced monitoring and early-warning capacity in order to minimize their damage. He hoped that the international community would go beyond humanitarian assistance and help developing countries build capacity in the area of disaster prevention, reduction and preparedness. SADC deeply appreciated the appeal, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, for donors and funding institutions to systematically invest in disaster risk reduction as an integral and targeted component of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation (A/61/229, para. 85). There was also a need, as recognized by the Secretary-General (para. 86), for Member States and Strategy stakeholders to increase their financial contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction to ensure adequate support for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

35. The solution to the world's ever-deteriorating environment lay in technological innovation and technology transfer and dissemination. To that end, efforts to address climate change and remove obstacles to international cooperation needed to be stepped up. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol remained important instruments in that regard. Demand for clean energy was growing around the world. Markets for wind and solar power were doubling every two or three years, while clean coal technologies were at least 25 per cent more efficient than traditional coal-fired power plants. Investment in energy efficiency was essential to saving energy and reducing costs. An effective global response to climate change required active cooperation and strengthened action by all countries, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capabilities.

36. For years, the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification had been beset by a shortage of funds. The international community should give due consideration to the issue and actively explore a mutually beneficial mechanism for technology transfer that would be conducive to the implementation of the Convention. The developed countries should fulfil their obligations and provide developing countries with financial and technological support. An integrated approach remained critical and deserved adequate attention. SADC therefore called for the Convention to be strengthened and further supported, and for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to be given adequate resources to support projects in developing countries.

37. SADC was convinced that the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety would greatly enhance efforts to protect biodiversity and biosafety. The Convention also played a key role with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Both the Convention and the Protocol needed to be implemented effectively in order to maximize the benefits of biotechnology, while minimizing its potential risks to the environment, biodiversity and human health.

38. SADC took note of the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (A/61/25 (Supp. No. 25)) and supported the decisions contained therein. It welcomed the selection of six African countries as pilot countries for the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building. Adequate funding and technical assistance was needed to ensure full implementation of the Plan.

39. **Mr. Gatan** (Philippines) said that the promotion of sustainable energy was a central component of the national development strategy for the Philippines. To that end, the Government had promoted a policy to achieve self-reliance in energy through the use of indigenous and renewable energy resources and alternative fuels, and by enhancing energy efficiency and conservation programmes. Thermal energy was now the primary source of electricity generation, placing the Philippines at the forefront of geothermal energy use, and at the cutting edge of technology. However, the high initial cost of exploiting renewable energy sources had slowed progress in that area. Energy security was expected to continue to have a direct effect on development, so technical and financial innovations should be combined to lower the cost of technology for more efficient use and conservation of fossil-based fuels, and for tapping renewable sources of energy.

40. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had promoted partnerships in support of development, including the delivery of affordable and reliable energy services. He appealed to the international community and all stakeholders to take a comprehensive approach to the issue of energy security within the larger context of sustainable development.

41. With reference to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, he said the Philippines had a high risk of exposure to natural disasters, and that recent events had underscored the need for a systematic and consistent implementation of risk reduction measures. Already, the strategies had included the dissemination of information on multiple hazards to provide a firm basis for the improvement of early warning systems, contingency planning, and sound plans for land use and development. In addition, training of emergency response personnel, reassessment of national capacity and risk factors had been addressed in a thrust towards the formulation of an integrated and holistic disaster risk management framework.

42. International assistance was needed to ensure the successful outcome of national efforts in that regard, as had been recognized in various resolutions and environmental agreements. In that context, he expressed appreciation for assistance granted by the partners of the Philippines and by the United Nations system in addressing the country's inherent vulnerability to natural disaster. Enhanced institutional and community capacity-building would boost disaster preparedness and response to natural or man-made disasters, such as the recent oil spill in Guimaras province, the worst maritime disaster in Philippine history. The world was constantly undergoing changes with which adaptation responses could not keep pace. It was therefore crucial that commitments on the use of risk reduction strategies and measures to improve resilience should be fulfilled.

43. **Mr. Park** Chun-kyoo (Republic of Korea) said that the trend towards achieving sustainable development, with the increased involvement of all stakeholders, was an indication that the international community had made progress in realizing its

commitments. He also recognized that the concept of sustainable development had been gaining ground as a universally shared goal.

44. His delegation looked forward to the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, and expected it to provide guidance in more efficient ways of achieving concrete results. Given the complexity of environmental issues, the United Nations Environment Programme should take the initiative in coordinating the environmental activities of the United Nations, offer policy guidance and set priorities based on hard science, while considering the implications for technological support and capacity-building.

45. His Government expected the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to serve as a platform for discussing more consolidated policy options and paving the way for substantial improvements in sustainable development.

46. **Mr. Gerus** (Belarus) said that for over two years, Belarus had been carrying out a new national strategy for sustainable social and economic development up to 2020, and that it was an active member of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Belarusian experts made great efforts to promote the application of the Convention to Combat Desertification in the relevant areas of Central and Eastern Europe. As a country with large tracts of forest, Belarus supported the work of the Forum on Forests and looked forward to the production of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. More active international cooperation on the sustainable use of forests might help forestry to make a significant contribution to the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

47. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had entered into force for Belarus in November 2005, although for technical reasons Belarus had not been listed in Annex B to the Protocol. At the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, Belarus had announced its readiness to limit its emissions of greenhouse gases in the period 2008-2012 to 95 per cent of the 1990 volume. It might be noted that the corresponding volume for neighbouring countries with similar levels of development was 100 per cent. It was to be hoped that Annex B would be duly amended at the next Conference of the Parties.

48. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan) said that it was imperative for the international community to implement commitments under the Conventions, to provide adequate resources to that end and to support synergies among implementation processes. She underscored the importance of capacity-building in order to enable States to integrate the objectives of the Conventions into national, subregional and regional plans for their subsequent implementation. Azerbaijan had reflected those objectives in its national development strategies and conducted impact assessments through its monitoring mechanisms.

49. It was, however, regrettable that in 2006, despite heightened awareness of the challenges posed by desertification and the need to safeguard biodiversity, Azerbaijan had experienced devastating fires. Over 600 square km had been damaged, with what was expected to be long-lasting effects on soil quality and stability, as well as on the microclimate of the territories. In that context, she highlighted a number of measures formulated by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan for mitigating the impact of fires, including the importance of needs assessment and rehabilitation measures.

50. She called on all stakeholders, including the secretariats of the environmental Conventions, to support and complement domestic efforts to implement such measures, and recalled that the Conference of the Parties had invited the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to make financial resources available for capacity-building activities, and to facilitate the coordination between GEF and Convention focal points at the country level. Timely support and synergies would contribute greatly to reversing massive biodiversity loss in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and to achieving agreed sustainable development objectives and targets.

51. **Ms. Grau** (Switzerland) said that the adoption of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management was a major step towards the successful implementation of the results of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Switzerland also attached great importance to the Marrakesh Process on production and consumption patterns, which it had established, and to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In addition to appealing for

efficient energy use, the Commission should aim at creating conditions that encouraged investment in sustainable methods of energy production and consumption.

52. Switzerland would continue to support the global platform for disaster risk reduction, which was intended to serve as a strategic forum for Governments to achieve measurable results in disaster risk reduction. To that end, all stakeholders should continue to search for innovative funding solutions. Switzerland was also convinced of the need for predictable financing of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction through an annual allocation from the regular budget of the organization. Such an investment would help to materialize the political commitments undertaken with the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Her delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for establishing a link between the disaster risk reduction activities and climate change adaptation programmes at all levels.

53. The best way to strengthen international environmental governance would be to strengthen UNEP and, in the longer term, upgrade its status. In the initial phase, universal participation in UNEP activities could be envisaged, according to modalities to be defined, to allow all States to submit proposals and participate actively in the work of the Programme.

54. **Mr. Capelle** (Marshall Islands) said that although small island developing States contributed the least to climate change, they were nonetheless the most vulnerable to its consequences, and the least able to adapt to its impact. The Marshall Islands, comprised of approximately 180 square km that were on average 2 m above sea level, depended on the ocean as a means of sustenance and survival. However, the ocean was also a source of concern during severe weather conditions, and there was reason to fear that sea-level rise would threaten the very existence of the group of islands. That risk was shared by many other low-lying Pacific island nations, and the loss of their collective environment and cultural resources was troubling. He therefore reiterated the need for urgent action at the global level to halt and reverse the trend; without such corrective action, national efforts at sustainable development would be rendered meaningless.

55. Renewing his delegation's support for the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, he called on all States, especially the major emitters, to ratify the Protocol without delay, and for strong leadership on the part of the major industrialized countries. He further called for international support to the small island developing States in developing and implementing comprehensive adaptation strategies.

56. Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity played an integral part in the social and economic development of the Marshall Islands. The state of the world's ocean and fish stocks were of utmost concern, as was the prevalence of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing within and outside the exclusive economic zone of the Marshall Islands. Such activities had a severe effect on the marine biodiversity of the region, and gravely undermined the livelihood of a population that relied on fisheries as their primary means of survival. Regional and international cooperation in that regard should focus on assisting the small island developing States in building capacity for monitoring and surveillance, and on assisting small island nations to develop domestic fisheries in order to ensure the adequate conservation and management of the region's fish stocks.

57. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said that Prince Albert II had created an environmental protection and sustainable development foundation to address climate change, biodiversity and water-related issues. The Government had established domestic mechanisms and intended to take international action to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. In that regard, the creation of the working group on the future commitments of developed countries after 2012 was promising, but must be accompanied by more sustained efforts.

58. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification should be strengthened and implemented. It should also be recognized as an international instrument that could help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As part of its international cooperation policy, Monaco was making active efforts to combat drought and desertification, especially in North Africa and the Sahel region. In partnership with local authorities, it was developing and financing programmes for the reforestation, conservation and restoration of degraded lands.

59. With regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Monaco supported the Brazilian initiative to proclaim 2010 the International Year of Biological

Diversity and was particularly pleased that the Conference of the Parties had recognized the regulation of activities in marine areas beyond national jurisdictions. In that connection, she noted that France, Italy and Monaco had designated an area for the protection of cetaceans. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on universal membership of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (A/61/322), she said that her delegation looked forward to the second phase of the United Nations reform initiative in the environmental field.

60. **Mr. Hassan** (Iraq) said that striking a balance among the economic, social and environmental components of development was one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries. Meeting it required stronger linkages between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system, which in turn required enhancement of the mandate of the Economic and Social Council. His delegation hoped for greater efforts to adopt the draft resolution on reforming the Economic and Social Council to better enable it to carry out its tasks.

61. The integration of developing countries into the global economy demanded that the developed countries remove restrictions on the movement of goods, services and technology. Both good governance and the organizational principles governing the private sector and financial institutions needed to be enhanced. His delegation expected donor countries to fulfil their ODA commitments and to supervise economic projects on the ground rather than just make promises or provide funds that could be targeted by certain parties for illicit profits.

62. In Iraq, terrorism was bringing about destruction of infrastructure, shortages and unemployment. He hoped that the international community would work in partnership with Iraq during its period of economic and political transition. Despite its difficulties, Iraq remained committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and was amending its trade and investment laws in the hope of attracting foreign investment and participating actively in the global trade system.

63. *Ms. Gomes (Portugal), Rapporteur, took the Chair.*

64. **Mr. Jiménez Sauma** (Mexico) said that, to meet its commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Mexico had presented its Third National Greenhouse Gas Inventory and was finalizing its Third National Communication to be submitted to the twelfth Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Kenya. It also planned to conclude its strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. It had hosted the Second Ministerial Meeting on the Gleneagles Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development as part of the discussions under the Framework Convention.

65. With regard to desertification, Mexico had presented its Third National Communication on national efforts to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including actions to combat land degradation and mitigate the adverse effects of drought. It had also established a national system to combat the desertification of natural resources with the participation of federal dependencies, state governments, rural producers, NGOs and academics, and had carried out reforestation initiatives on over 1 million hectares and revegetation programmes in semi-desert areas. He reiterated the need to step up efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action, notably through the establishment of a culture of prevention and risk mitigation activities. Over the past few years, his country had developed early warning systems for tropical cyclones, earthquakes and the Popocatépetl Volcano near Mexico City. His delegation believed that the United Nations should maintain an appropriate balance between emergency relief and capacity-building for disaster prevention, particularly in developing and least developed countries.

66. **Mr. Murillo Carrasco** (Bolivia) said that Bolivia was committed to multilateralism and the maintenance, conservation and development of the environment from a global perspective. Its new Government was fighting poverty, inequality and lack of opportunities and was also creating jobs for the development and protection of the environment. Under a new development plan that would bring significant qualitative changes to the country, his Government intended to consolidate its model of diversified and comprehensive development based on value-added products and citizen participation, resulting in a more equitable distribution of income. The concept of shared responsibility was particularly apt in the field of biodiversity and, in that regard, Bolivia would work closely with countries that

held similar views on guaranteeing the protection of biodiversity and increased trade and the intellectual property rights to local indigenous products, such as traditional medicines, that were widely used in the country.

67. The sustainable use of Bolivia's biodiversity resources would contribute to food security and nutrition for the population, particularly for the indigenous peoples. The development and trading of new products derived from biodiversity would allow for the transfer of technology and knowledge to the production and services sector. Through efficient management of its protected areas, Bolivia sought to preserve its biodiversity, a strategic resource for its development. The eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity had recognized the sovereignty of States over their biological and genetic resources and their right to use those resources in a just and equitable manner. Bolivia supported that view and reaffirmed its commitment to the environmental agreements to which it was a party.

68. *Mr. Fonseca (Brazil), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

69. **Mr. Alsaker** (Norway) said that Norway welcomed the growing recognition that environmental challenges must be addressed in order to reduce poverty and solve the world's development problems. The Commission on Sustainable Development should continue leading the effort to follow up on the Rio and Johannesburg documents. Norway attached great importance to the issues addressed in the Commission's two-year cycle. With respect to sustainable development, his Government cooperated closely with civil society, but the most important follow-up on its national strategy was conducted by the different ministries within their fields of responsibility, with overall coordination by the Ministry of Finance. Norway had also prepared a national set of indicators and had asked its neighbour, Sweden, to conduct a peer review of its work the following year and suggest possible improvements.

70. Noting the devastating effects of climate change and its acceleration in the Arctic region, he called for a truly global regime to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Norway and other countries had accepted their emission commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. However, the international community had a responsibility to offer significant assistance to the world's poorest and least resourceful countries, which had not contributed much to the build-up of greenhouse gases, but were still vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions would make a crucial contribution to global-level disaster risk management. Norway urged all parties to the Convention on Climate Change to concentrate on achieving real progress on both aspects of climate change — mitigation and adaptation. It welcomed the recent inclusion of the 2010 biodiversity target as a component of the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability. It also welcomed the progress made under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. His Government had decided to build a global seed vault in the Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic, which would contain duplicates of seed varieties already stored in gene banks elsewhere and provide an additional safety net for the world's genetic heritage, for use in emergency situations.

71. **Mr. Al-Hajrey** (Kuwait) said his country's median income compared favourably with that of a number of States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and that it was one of four Arab countries to be classified as a high human development country by the Human Development Index in 2002. Kuwait was ahead of schedule in its efforts to achieve all eight of the Millennium Development Goals, and, although a developing country itself, had disbursed over US$ 12.5 million in development assistance to 101 countries through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). That amount was twice the internationally agreed-upon ODA target. Kuwait maintained its firm belief in the potential of international cooperation to overcome the challenges facing sustainable development.

72. *Ms. Intelmann (Estonia) resumed the Chair.*

73. **Mr. Al-Gazali** (Oman) said that his country's commitment to balancing sustainable development with environmental protection was reflected at both the international and national levels. Oman had acceded to a number of regional and international environmental agreements, including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the

Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kyoto Protocol. Oman was also implementing national plans designed to make full use of available resources while keeping in mind environmental concerns. People remained at the centre of development, and the Sultanate was focusing on developing human resources to give its people the opportunity to raise their standard of living without depriving future generations of their fair share of natural resources. His delegation called on the international community to provide financial support to developing countries' efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as well as a balance between exploitation of their resources and environmental protection.

74. **Mr. Al-Mabrok** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that despite notable progress, there were still many challenges standing in the way of achieving sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects. In the least developed countries in particular, weak economic structures and limited resources made it difficult to finance development plans, and increased assistance was necessary to enable them to acquire information and communications technology and develop human resources. A fair and non-discriminatory trading system and the removal of obstacles to sustainable development were the keys to implementing the recommendations of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. His delegation also stressed the importance of support for the United Nations Environment Programme and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building.

75. Natural disasters were on the rise. The international community should take steps in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action to reduce their economic and social expenditures through innovative funding policies and enhanced early warning mechanisms. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also needed to be implemented to preserve climate stability for current and future generations, and support and funding should be provided for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to enable sustainable development in arid zones that were populated by millions of people.

76. His country was committed to the goals of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In addition to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, it had implemented a number of sustainable development and environmental protection programmes of its own, including policies to encourage the use of cleaner burning fuels and the expansion of green cover projects in desert areas to absorb carbon dioxide. Protecting the environment was the greatest service that could be provided to future generations.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.